

**Open letter to Federal President Alexander van der Bellen,
Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz,
Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache and the members of the Federal Government.**
English Translation

Saying no to the migration pact damages Austria's reputation and undermines the goals of a common migration policy.

Federal President Alexander van der Bellen is right when he warns the Federal Government not to put Austria's good reputation as a reliable international partner at risk. This is precisely what the Federal Government is doing with its rejection of the Migration Pact.

The issue of migration, as well as that of asylum, can only be resolved at the international level and must be managed in an orderly fashion. If Austria now isolates itself on this important issue, this will do nothing to reduce migration, but rather will make international understanding and cooperation on this issue much more difficult.

The approach to the Migration Pact being adopted by the Federal Government – first and foremost by Chancellor Kurz and Vice-Chancellor Strache – presents a very questionable and unprofessional picture overall. Austria worked on the Migration Pact until its finalisation and completion without expressing any reservations. Sebastian Kurz was the Minister responsible at the start of the negotiations. Now a complete U-turn has been executed and the Pact is being rejected by Federal Chancellor Kurz and Vice-Chancellor Strache for no clear reason. This therefore raises the suspicion that this is the result of domestic bartering between the FPÖ and the ÖVP.

On this issue, the Federal Government is acting out of pure populism which is based on false information and is against the interests of Austria. The Government's stance has been heavily criticised by international law experts and even by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

How can the Austrian Federal Government suddenly start to question 17 key tenets of a pact that it itself negotiated and concluded months ago? Why were these concerns not raised and addressed during the negotiation process?

The Migration Pact is a voluntary, political declaration of intent and not a binding treaty under international law. The signatory states are expressly granted sovereignty in their decisions. The Pact will not grant a "human right to migration", nor will there be a "human right to asylum".

Austria is home to a UN seat. In addition, our country currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU and has therefore also been involved in negotiating the Migration Pact on behalf of the EU. The fact that Austria is now rejecting this Pact and thus motivating other countries to follow suit sends a disastrous message. The reality is that Austria is a country that needs immigration. It was only because of international cooperation that Austria was rebuilt after the Second World War and became a sovereign state. Only through international cooperation will it be possible to steer migration in an orderly and regulated manner and to support people effectively so that they also have prospects for the future in their home countries.

If we do not do this, it will ultimately come back to haunt the entire European population.

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, do you really believe that Austria can control migration and, above all, illegal migration to Austria by rejecting international cooperation? When will you finally turn your back on inhuman populism and begin to tackle our country's problems seriously?

You have no answer to the question of migration, but you reject the international UN Migration Pact. You have no answer to the questions that arise with regard to asylum seekers, but you prohibit young asylum seekers from completing an apprenticeship in occupations in which there is a shortage of skilled labour and instead want to attract more workers from third countries to Austria who, in the event of a downturn in the economy, will be the first to become unemployed again. You have no answer to the problems of secondments, cross-border wage dumping and social fraud, but you reject the EU labour authority and want to increase the penalties for social fraud.

All this demonstrates the poverty of Austria's strategic thinking, damages our international reputation and is far from being a forward-looking, serious policy for the people of our country.

Deputy Chairman of the NR Josef Muchitsch
World Council Member, Building and Wood Workers' International